



PRINTERS

FAQ

Q I'm thinking of buying a multifunction peripheral (MFP), but I need a good scanner. Do any MFPs have a decent one or should I buy separate devices?

A MFPs have a reputation for weak scan performance, but don't assume that all MFPs are bad or that a standalone scanner will automatically be better.

Most inkjet and laser MFPs will be fine for general-purpose work at resolutions of up to 300 dots per inch (dpi). If you'll often be working with creative projects – capturing photographs, for example – we'd suggest a photo-orientated device such as the HP Photosmart 2610 in our Hotlist, below. MFPs with a backlight for negative or slide scanning are rare, but the scanner on Epson's RX620 (below) will do justice to 35mm film. If you shoot medium- or large-format, or you have lots of negatives to get through, go for a quality flatbed or dedicated film scanner.

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REVIEW MULTIFUNCTION PERIPHERAL

KONICA MINOLTA
PagePro 1380MF

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £206 inc VAT

SUPPLIER <http://uk.insight.com>

DETAILS www.konicaminoltaprinters.co.uk



Konica Minolta's PagePro 1380MF looks like the PagePro 1350W reviewed in *Labs, Shopper* July 2005, but with a scanner fitted on top. It also looks very similar to Oki's B4250 multifunction peripheral (MFP), reviewed in the same issue's *What's New* section. It has no fax/modem, but a more expensive 1390MF model adds fax facilities and an automatic document feeder (ADF).

The printer takes two separate consumables that are easy to install and remove. Replacement toner is available with a 6,000-page yield, and the drum has a capacity of 20,000 pages. This gives the 1380MF print costs of around 1.5p per page, which is competitive for a laser MFP.

Installing the driver was quick enough. We weren't so happy about a distracting animated icon added to Windows' System Tray, but this can be removed from the Startup program group.

The 1380MF's print driver is rudimentary, with no guide for manual duplex printing and a radio button permanently selecting a 600dpi resolution, which is the only one available. You can print multiple pages to a sheet, but there's no diagram to show how the various options will appear on the page.

The mono laser print engine is rated at 20 pages per minute (ppm), and peaked at a credible 18.2ppm when producing 50 copies of our letter test. Printed text appeared very sharp, although under magnification we noticed jagged edges in the outlines of small characters. Though grainy, graphical prints were quite acceptable and appeared quickly.

EXCLUSIVE



We've been disappointed by the scanners in many mono laser multifunction peripherals, so the results from the 1380MF came as a pleasant surprise. Although colours appeared a little milky and our test scans weren't the sharpest we've seen, they were great for this type of product.

Konica Minolta's TWAIN interface is basic, but it's easy to understand and doesn't miss anything vital. Scans are acceptably quick at low to moderate resolutions; capturing a 6x4" photograph at 600dpi took 23.5 seconds.

The 1380MF combines decent scan, print and copy performance with a reasonable price and acceptable running costs. It's a great MFP for a small office that doesn't need colour printing or a fax.

Simon Handby

✓ Good prints, scans and copies; reasonable running costs

✗ No fax

SPECIFICATIONS 600dpi print resolution, 1,200dpi scan resolution, USB Hi-Speed interface. **Part code** 5250229200

HOTLIST LASER PRINTER

SAMSUNG
ML-2250

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £99 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk

Samsung's ML-2250 takes a single 5,000-page-rated consumable, which is enough for 10 reams of paper; each sheet costing 1.33p to print. Print quality is excellent. This printer has 16MB of memory and a 250-sheet input cassette, so it's well specified. You can also upgrade the memory and add networking. This is a great-value printer.



SPECIFICATIONS Mono laser, 1,200dpi, 20ppm maximum speed, USB Hi-Speed interface. **Part code** ML-2250/XEU

HOTLIST COLOUR LASER PRINTER

EPSON
AcuLaser C1100

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £210 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.epson.co.uk



Epson's C1100 is reasonably large for a four-pass colour laser, and it's more tricky than many to set up. In our tests it came commendably close to Epson's claimed speeds, but the most welcome discovery was its superb all-round print quality. This is an excellent, inexpensive printer with reasonable running costs.



SPECIFICATIONS Colour laser, 600dpi, 25ppm mono/5ppm colour maximum speed, USB Hi-Speed interface. **Part code** C11C567001

HOTLIST MULTIFUNCTION PERIPHERAL

HP
Photosmart 2610

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £176 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

This MFP is a great all-rounder. Its scanner has no automatic document feeder, but it's fast and delivers good results. Text printing is quick, and affordable at 2.2p per page. Print and copy quality is excellent. At this price, its network port and built-in fax make it a bargain.



SPECIFICATIONS 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 2,400x4,800dpi scan resolution, USB, Wired 10/100 Ethernet and Pictbridge USB interfaces. **Part code** Q5542B

REVIEW PHOTO PRINTER

LEXMARK P450

RATING ★★

PRICE £139 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com
DETAILS www.lexmark.co.uk

There are plenty of dedicated 6x4" photo printers on the market, and jostling between manufacturers has driven the price of entry-level models below £80. With such competition it's hard to make a printer stand out, but the CD writer fitted to Lexmark's P450 is unique.

The P450 is designed to make it easy to print photos from cameras and a range of digital storage. It has memory card slots for the common formats, and a PictBridge USB port that also recognises USB flash storage. An optional Bluetooth adaptor lets you print directly from camera phones or PDAs.

Insert a CD into the P450's drive, and you can print photos directly from it. However, insert a writable disc, and you can back up pictures on it from a memory card. The printer's CD drive sensibly creates multi-session discs, allowing you to make repeated backups of small-capacity cards without needing a new CD-R each time.

The printer's menu provides several basic editing options, allowing you to crop, resize or remove red-eye from an image without needing a computer. Unfortunately, the P450 has no standard USB interface, so it's impossible to connect a PC. Lexmark says this helps to make the printer easy to use, but it's a strange omission that greatly reduces its appeal.

As with most compact photo inkjets, the P450 prints with three inks. It's easy to insert the single cartridge; should you want to align the printer's heads, the routine is automatic and surprisingly fast. With no PC connection there's no driver to install,



so you can start printing immediately. However, this only hastened our disappointment with the P450's mediocre print quality. Even at the highest setting, prints had prominent grain and colour noise that could clearly be seen from a normal viewing distance. Outlines seemed soft, and some white areas seemed to have a green bias.

The pricing of Lexmark's 140-print ink and paper bundle gives the P450 class-leading running costs of just 19.9p per print. Its ability to create archives of entire memory cards would make it ideal for digital camera users with no PC, if it only produced better photos. For computer owners, HP's Photosmart 8250 (see Hotlist, page 28) is a far better buy. Anyone else could get similarly priced digital prints from a high street lab.

Simon Handby

 Very simple to use; cheap to run

 No PC connection; poor print quality; expensive

SPECIFICATIONS Three-colour inkjet, 4,800x1,200dpi maximum resolution, PictBridge USB interface. **Part code** 23C0002

HOTLIST INKJET PRINTER

CANON PIXMA iP1600

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £40 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.canon.co.uk

This budget inkjet from Canon is basic: it doesn't even have an output tray to hold printed pages. It doesn't compromise on print speed or quality, but it is expensive to run. With mono pages costing around 7p and colour pages more than 11p each, it's a good choice if you print very rarely.



SPECIFICATIONS Four-colour inkjet, 4,800x1,200dpi maximum resolution, USB interface. **Part code** 9989A01AA

HOTLIST COLOUR LASER MFP

EPSON AcuLaser CX11NF

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £582 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.misco.co.uk
DETAILS www.epson.co.uk

Multifunction peripherals based on colour laser printers aren't getting any smaller, but they're finally affordable. This hulking Epson is the best example we've tested. It has built-in fax capability, a good scanner and great print quality. It's easy to install and use, but colour prints could be cheaper.



SPECIFICATIONS 600dpi print resolution, 25ppm mono/5ppm colour maximum speed, 600x600dpi scan resolution, USB Hi-Speed and 10/100 Ethernet interfaces. **Part code** C11C588081DA

BYTE SIZE!



Our round-up of the best new gadgets and software

DVD The Krays

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £14 inc VAT

DETAILS
www.dvd.co.uk


This attempt to bring the story of Britain's most infamous gangsters to the screen attracted notoriety and praise in 1990. It's a brave film, which tries to show two sides of the Krays – both their devotion to their family and the ruthless extortion racket they ran in the East End. It's not the sickening violence that lets it down, though, as much as the stilted dialogue and uninspired direction.

Gary and Martin Kemp acquit themselves capably as the twins, especially Martin as the quietly sinister Reggie, and Billie Whitelaw is great as Violet (they loved their mum, you know). The DVD features in this two-disc 15th anniversary edition include commentaries and an interview with Reggie days before his death.

Chris Miller

SCYTHE Katana

RATING ★

PRICE £27 inc VAT

SUPPLIER QuietPC 08703 214621

DETAILS www.quietpc.com

Scythe's Katana is a quiet processor cooler for any current AMD or Intel processor. The heat sink comes with everything you need to install it, including a miniature spanner, but fitting it is fiddly due to the number of separate parts involved.

The Katana is meant to work with any speed of AMD or Intel processor, but it performed very poorly in our tests. Our 3.6GHz Intel Pentium 4 ran at 75° when idle and 85° under load and was barely stable, compared to the stock Intel cooler's 64° under load. A 2.8GHz Intel Pentium 4 was slightly cooler at 70° idle and 76° under load, but this is still far hotter than the standard heat sink.

Chris Finnamore





REVIEW MULTIFUNCTION PERIPHERAL

HP
Photosmart 2575

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £140 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.hp.co.uk

HP has just updated its Photosmart range of printers and multifunction peripherals. The Photosmart 2575 is the most affordable of the photo-orientated multifunction range, but it still has a full complement of photo-printing features.

A standard Ethernet port means you can connect the 2575 to a network, but otherwise its USB port is fine for a single computer. Either installation is straightforward, but HP's bundled software requires at least 395MB of disk space and takes quite a while to install.

The Photosmart 2575 can print with six inks, which reduces the appearance of grain in photos, but this requires an optional photo cartridge. The printer accepts virtually all HP's Viverra ink range, including the grey photo cartridge and high-yield supplies. Using these, running costs are around 2.2p per mono page and 4.7p in colour, which is very low for an inkjet.

This multifunction peripheral performed really well in our print tests, completing our 50-page draft document at 19.5 ppm. Its speed dropped to 5.1ppm on our higher-quality letter test, but nonetheless this is still a solid performance. The 2575 was also quick when printing in colour, turning out our 24-page test document at more than 2ppm.

The quality of our plain paper results was very good, with crisp text and solid colours that had minimal banding. Photographs printed using the standard four-ink setup showed some grain, but they had high levels of detail and accurate

colours. We found it simple to make prints from an SD card without using a PC.

Although the Photosmart's printer is well made, we were less keen on its scanner. The lid seems solid, but its hinge design doesn't allow it to close flat on over-sized originals. It was quite slow, taking 16.5 seconds to preview an A4 document and 39 seconds to capture it at 300 dots per inch (dpi). At 1,200dpi, it took one minute and 34 seconds to scan a 6x4" photograph.

The colours in our test scans were true to the original, but the scanner's focus wasn't perfect and our images looked soft. This was also noticeable in copies, which at the default setting took around 40 seconds in greyscale or colour.

The 2575 has a great printer and can easily be shared between multiple networked PCs. However, its scan performance is below par for this price.

Simon Handby

✓ Great printer with low running costs

✗ A little expensive to buy; scans are slow and soft; large install with no custom option

SPECIFICATIONS 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 2,400x4,800dpi scan resolution, USB, PictBridge USB and 10/100 Ethernet interfaces. Part code Q7215B

CHOOSING AN...

INKJET
PRINTER

Follow our step-by-step guide to identify your ideal inkjet

1 You can get a decent inkjet for under £50. With the minimum spec shown below, high-quality printing is possible, but slow. The actual print speed of inkjets can be half the quoted (maximum) speed on text documents, and even slower when printing graphics. Entry-level inkjets such as these are designed only for light use as they are flimsy and expensive to run.

2 Spending £80 will get you a much more capable printer that is either faster and better built or better at reproducing photos. If your priority is documents, you'll want double the minimum speed and half the print costs of the sub-£50 printer. Look for inkjets that can handle all your office media, including envelopes and labels.

3 If your priority is photos, speed is less important. Instead, choose a printer that can reproduce subtle tones well. Only hands-on testing, not specifications, will tell you this. Borderless printing (right up to the edge of the paper) should also be possible. Pay particular attention to running costs: photos use three times as much ink as regular colour documents.

4 Heavy-duty office inkjets can cost up to £1,000 and their build quality is improving. A duplex unit and A3 capability, starting at around £300, are also worth considering. Large, individually replaceable ink tanks can cut running costs.

5 Pricier photo printers allow you to print digital photos by plugging memory cards straight in – no PC is required. An LCD preview screen gives you more control over this.

FILL IN YOUR SPECS HERE

(Recommended minimum in grey)

PAGE SIZE: A4

QUOTED SPEED: 18ppm mono, 12ppm colour

PRICE PER PAGE: 4p mono, 8p colour

RESOLUTION: 1,200x4,800dpi

INK COLOURS: Four in two tanks

FEATURES:

HOTLIST INKJET PRINTER

HP
Photosmart 8250

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £135 inc VAT

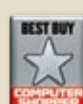
SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.hp.co.uk

The Photosmart 8250 produces excellent print quality on plain or coated paper. It's one of the fastest photo printers we've tested, but it also dashed off our draft text test at 18.5ppm. It has easy-to-use direct photo-printing features, and low running costs make it a superb all-rounder.



SPECIFICATIONS Six-colour inkjet, 4,800x1,200dpi maximum resolution, USB Hi-Speed and PictBridge USB interfaces. Part code Q3470B

HOTLIST INKJET PRINTER

HP
DeskJet 5940

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £73 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.hp.co.uk

A metal lid lends a touch of class to this mid-range inkjet, but the supplied 800-page black cartridge makes it incredibly good value. It's also very fast, reaching 20ppm in our draft text test.

Low mono running costs of 2.2p per page helped it eclipse the competition in our recent inkjet Labs test.



SPECIFICATIONS Four-colour inkjet, 4,800x1,200dpi maximum resolution, USB and PictBridge USB interfaces. Part code C9017B